

COLORADO CANYONS NATIONAL CONSERVATION AREA
Mack Ridge Working Group Meeting Minutes
November 12, 2002

Attendees:

Greg Gnesios	Sue Benjamin	Pat Kennedy	Clark Rieves
Gene Arnesen	Nadja Brozina	Mel Lloyd	Jane Ross
Robert Anthony	Kevin Foote	Tom Nix	Lovell Sasser

Greetings and Introductions

Kevin Foote opened tonight's meeting, held at the Grand Vista Hotel, at 5:10 p.m. Jane Ross, Colorado Canyons National Conservation Area (CCNCA) Planning Team Leader, commented that tonight's meeting was scheduled to allow the group to wrap up discussions prior to developing the goals and objectives statement for the Mack Ridge area.

Both Lovell Sasser and Nadja Brozina had corrections to the October 28 meeting minutes. Trails "C" and "D" are multiple-use trails and, thus, designated for all user groups. Proposed Trail "K" would also be multiple use, including horseback riders.

Working Group Discussions

Kevin confirmed that users on Rustlers Loop should continue to travel in a clockwise direction, especially since the existing signage is set up for that direction. The direction of travel on Horsethief Bench should be counterclockwise for horseback riders and clockwise for mountain bikers.

Jane wanted to clarify one of the listed recommendations in that the Moore Fun and Mack Ridge Trails should encourage mountain bike use only. Jane also noted that suggestions from the recent survey included both providing a skill-rating advisory for each of the trails, and estimating times for completing them. The Working Group has also recognized the need for this information.

During last month's facilitated meeting, the group had reached consensus on some recommendations. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) handout (see attached) summarized those recommendations, along with the perceived benefits derived from recreational experiences available in the Mack Ridge area.

Jane felt that the group would want to focus on the "Future Conditions" and "Social Setting" during tonight's discussions and set the standards for which the BLM would manage the Mack Ridge area.

Future Conditions

Gene Arnesen, BLM Outdoor Recreation Planner, reminded the group to describe exactly what qualities it wants to see maintained within the Mack Ridge area. Jane asked whether anyone wanted to see anything change, and rehabilitating the areas needing vegetation was mentioned.

Kevin pondered whether the group should address grazing issues and personally felt that it should not. While the grazing allotments should remain, the group can encourage managing for a healthier environment through its recommendations to the Advisory Council.

Greg Gnesios, CCNCA Manager, urged the group to address the grazing issues and make a recommendation. Jane reminded everyone that legislation allows for grazing within the National Conservation Area (NCA) because it is a traditional activity, but land health is an issue needing attention.

While both grazing and weather patterns may be to blame, many felt that vegetation in the area has suffered and gradually decreased through the past several years. Recommending a temporary suspension and/or rotating grazing allotment use within the NCA were discussed.

The group agreed that future conditions for the Mack Ridge area should reflect:

1. Optimal ecological health with noticeable results
2. Peace and quiet
3. Minimal traffic
4. No use controls

Jane summarized the key points regarding grazing for the Mack Ridge future conditions:

- Manage grazing for sustainability and conservation.
- Maintain, and in some areas, restore the ecological and environmental health.
- Require annual monitoring for Land Health.
- Pursue options to limit grazing activity when ecological monitoring indicates it is necessary.
- Address sheep grazing allotments.

Social Setting

The group first needs to define what a “group” means to them in a recreation context, as well as the criteria defining a formal versus informal group. Everyone agreed that, in addition to limiting the number of events allowed, guided commercial trips should be limited in the Mack Ridge area as well. While there may currently be minimal activity in these areas, future activity is sure to increase.

Groups

A group was defined as at least 20 people. A non-commercial group was defined as less than 20 people with no BLM authorizations required. A group of 20 to 50 people could require a special use authorization by the BLM.

Events

A group of 50 or more people would be considered an event. An event, whether it is classified as competitive or commercial, could be limited to one event per month per year. However, two discretionary events would be allowed per year, but a maximum of two events per month would apply.

The group agreed that guided, commercial horseback riding trips should not be allowed.

The group discussed the BLM permitting process for commercial and outfitting activities and agreed on recommending a maximum of five permittees per year, with a limit of six people (including the guide) per permit per day. A future alternative would be requiring these commercial groups to use their permits Monday through Friday only.

The group adequately addressed the desired management structure tonight but still needs to develop a future management statement and describe its vision for the Mack Ridge area. A Working Group meeting has been scheduled for 5:00 p.m., at the BLM office, on Tuesday, December 3.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

MACK RIDGE ZONE

GOALS: Maintain the Mack Ridge area to support recreational activities including world-class single-track mountain biking, hiking, running and horseback riding in a manner that will promote land health, conserve natural resources, and protect the enjoyment of current and future recreationalists.

Encourage areas of quiet use, discourage motorized use on the current trail system.

Allow multiple-use in the area while recognizing that user benefits and enjoyment will provide a self-limitation of activities in the area.

Benefits	Experience	Activities
Improved physical fitness	Enjoying frequent exercise	Manage for visitors to have the opportunity to engage in day use , mountain biking, running, hiking, horseback riding and Off-Highway Vehicle use.
Better Health Maintenance	Savoring Area Canyon-Country Aesthetics	
Increased Quality of Life	Escaping Everyday Responsibilities	
Greater Sense of Overall Wellness	Testing Endurance	

Physical Setting

Retain existing landscape with a few modifications to increase trail connections.

Implementation Actions

Trail Proposals:

Pursue acquisition of State land and improve parking facilities for Lions Loop trailhead, focusing on amenities for mountain bikers, hikers, and runners

Complete Mary's Loop at Upper End (5 mi of trail)

-Trails "A" and "E"

Complete Mack Ridge Loop (2 mi)

-Trail "F" on map\

Designate Moore Fun and Mack Ridge trails for Mountain Bike only

Construct trails on each side of Frontage Road – one multiple-use , one mountain bike

Close and rehabilitate dead-end and pioneered roads and trails

Social Setting

Manage area to maximize Quiet Use zones in area for mountain biking, hiking and running. Provide education on etiquette and expectations to minimize conflict between user groups.

Implementation Actions

Sign trails for relative difficulty, length, and estimated time to complete.

Designate trails for expert use only (Mary's Loop)

Implement permit or reservation system to limit users when use necessary

Administrative Setting